

The Book of the Is ~ A book on bridges (2013)

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Author's note ~ This book began in September 2001 and was completed in December 2004; President Bush had just been reelected to a second term and the war on terror was three years old. It has not been updated (there's no President Obama yet); it was edited for errors, misnomers and wordiness in 2012 and published in 2013.

Excerpt from Chapter 1, Omphalos (4 of 16)

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The adaptable human explains the basis for organized life, thus forming a central part of activity. One can imagine a human beginning; the brain awakens to new sounds, new experiences, and new codes. The codes are repeated the next day and the next, until the pattern is normalized into a gesture or sound. These chemical events become conscious to us.

Because all animals adapt, we have to say more about humans to differentiate us by degrees, if nothing else, from other animals. The differences are found in the way we process chemicals, as it is this mix that makes us unique. Our consciousness is sometimes called a "higher level," or something to that effect; what is meant is more complex. That seems to be the case. Physically, consciousness (thought) is formed in the synaptic exchanges between brain cells. With chemicals and electricity, the body makes consciousness. That's the physical part.

In one way, I think that is what happened to "Abram." That's what Abraham was called before he received God's covenant and was circumcised; that's when he became Abraham. So, Abram was conscious and had an experience. He became the first of what we call the prophets of monotheism. The prophets have taught *a priori* knowledge - God's knowledge. They have changed the world with their words - God's words. In order to do so, science says, some chemicals combined or were lacking - things like serotonin, norepinephrine, and anandamide (human names for God's creations) - naturally occurring, that is, chemicals produced by the body to be used in processing sense - consciousness - thinking - words.

Every prophet of the Abrahamic trilogy has taught the same lessons. They had similar conscious experiences that they found to be transcendental. In one sense, this means they were experiences that couldn't be explained - unknowable is a word they may have used. But that doesn't go far enough. What the prophets of monotheism have taught and what we have learned is that there will be a day of Judgement; that we will have that experience and that experience matters. This is repeated over and over and taught again and again: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, and all the others. I know there are questions of legitimacy concerning Jesus and Muhammad, as well as Ishmael and others, as prophets of monotheism; that does not invalidate the fact that they taught the same lessons concerning justice and the day of Judgement.

So it is chemicals that differentiate us from other animals and from the prophets – the prophets of monotheism that is. The Pythia at the Delphic Oracle is another story. Rather than God finding and hailing the prophet, the Pythia was recruited, trained and thought to channel the power of Apollo, the Greek god of prophecy; how different an arrangement that was.

The Pythia was always a woman from Delphi. She had few other requirements that concerned her standing in Greek culture. Her age didn't matter, for instance, and neither did her wealth. She had to prepare for the oracle sessions: this seems to have required fasting and no sex. The gas turns out to have been ethylene; it rose from a double fault line under the temple; a fissure underneath the tripod-seat of the Pythia allowed the chamber to fill with gas. When taken in small doses regulated by time, the Pythia would enter into a slight trance. Individuals from the simple to the great would come to ask her questions. Delphi became the center of the world not for the power of *a priori* knowledge, but because of experiential knowledge, which is called *a posteriori* knowledge (think of the prefix post-). It should be noted that before asking the question of the Pythia, the questioner had to perform a ritual bath and sacrifice an animal; if the entrails quivered when splashed with water, the questioner was turned away from the temple and did not meet with the Pythia. Like the Old Testament, the temple of Apollo paid homage to animal sacrifice.

The prophets of monotheism told us about God's knowledge and a day of Judgement; the prophets of Apollo, the Pythias, told us about world affairs. Ironically, perhaps, most of this was going on at the same time and within a thousand miles or so. Abraham to Muhammad runs from the early second millennium to 632 AD. There were temples in operation at Delphi from around 1100 BC until approximately 200 AD, at which time the ethylene gas disappeared.

It was said the Pythia: "neither conceals nor reveals the truth, but only hints at it." A king learned that lesson the hard way. King Croesus of Lydia asked the Pythia if he should invade his enemy, Persia. The Pythia responded that a great empire would fall; King Croesus invaded not knowing *his* was the falling empire.

The Pythia had no prior knowledge of the king's impending defeat because it wasn't impending at all – it was his call, and he made the choice. That was how the Pythia worked: she wasn't a prophet of *a priori* knowledge, of transcendental knowledge, but a prophet of experience. She answered your question and let you be on your way; her morality was your morality.